A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, May 13. 1712.

WHEN King *Charles* II. was moved to suppress the Liberty of Printing, which was grown Exorbitant in his Time, as much perhaps, or more than it is now, No, said the King, *Let them alone, I can punish them for Printing, but if they are stop'd from Printing, they will write all the VVicked Things in the VVorld and there's no finding them.*

Any one that remembers those Times, may call to mind, that the Liberty of the Press was the only Stop to written Scandal; all the Wit of Man could not stop it before, and the Flux was so great, the Town so swarmed with Lampoons and virulent Papers, that vast Collections of them were afterwards made, tho' Imperfect and Uncorrect——But when Printing became publick, the Humour vented another Way.

Now could our Parliament find a Way, *with the Pamphlet Printing*, to sup-

ſuppreſs *Libel Writing*, I confeſs they would do a great Work; but all the Parliaments that are, or ever ſhall be, cannot do it; and as ſoon as ever the Preſs ſtops, the Lampooning Plague will ſpread to ſuch a degree, as was never known before; no Puniſhment can affect it, no Law can be made to reach it — It is a Miſchief handed about as inviſibly, as Spirits walk, or Witches fly; no Power, no Severity can prevent it.

It has been always ſo in all Governments in the World: The Image or Statue of *Paſquin* at *Rome*, is grown famous, not half ſo much for the Performances of the Perſon who it Repreſented, as for the uſe made of it ſince it was ſet up; under this Figure were always Poſted Libels and Satyrs, Papers of Perſonal Scandal, and all manner of Sarcaſms, either on the *Roman* Government, or on the Actions of other Princes and Nations; from hence, a Lampoon in a Modern Dialect, is new-Chriſten'd, and now call'd Paſquinade.

Every Pocket-Book will now be a *Paſquin*, even our Trades-men will have a diviſion in their Letter-Caſes, and place their Libels next their Bills of *Exchange*; the Wit of the Town will be quite turn'd, and in Converſation, the Queſtion will invert from *what News*? And *have you read the Papers*, &c.? To What New Thing have you got? Have you ſeen ſuch a Copy of Verſes? Then out comes the Pocket Book, or the more formidable *Letter Caſe*, and the famous piece is Communicated with as much Guſt, as ever Young Heir read the News of his Father's Death, or paſſionate Lover receiv'd an Invitation to his Miſtreſs.

Then all the Wits are ſet to work to find out the Characters, and they fit the Coat to every ſhoulder that they would have it wear; this is my Lord *S*——; this my Lord *B*——; this ſuch a one, this another; ſo they make *one Author* Lampoon a whole Nation, and they coin Scandal for the Paper that he who made it never thought of.

Then the Society runs to Divination, and a World of Cunning Men will ſet up for a Livelyhood among us to find the Names of the Authors—— Wiſe *Ab* —— *G*——*y* pretends to raiſe great Fame by this Practice, he knows the Author of *Tom Thumb* by the Stile, and can tell which is the beſt Edition of *Cheviot Caſe* — He'll anſwer for the Author of the *whole Duty of Man*, and knows exactly by the Language which of the Books are Spurious and which Genuine, that are call'd by his Name; he can tell you to a Line, where *John Bunyan* left off, and how many Pages of the Pilgrims Progreſs was wrote *when the Good Man was ſick*, by another Hand.

This bright Piece, *ſays he*, is the *Spectator*; that dull Scurrillous one, is *De Foe*; I know them, ſays the Confident F—l as well, as if I had ſeen them write it; ſo Curſes and Praiſes, like the *hiſt* or the *Clap'd* at the *Theatre*, go by the Guſts and Humours of the Mob, and every Action in the Nation, ſhall now with Impunity be Arraign'd and

and ſtand Tryal at the *Toilet* and the *Tea Table*, without Jury or fair Hearing.

What a Deluge of Slander and Ribaldry are theſe Times a going to let in upon us! And what End will it anſwer? Envy, Revenge, Slander, and Banter, with all the Attendant Devils which gratifie diſturb'd Minds, will now be Unchain'd; Men are now to be allow'd all manner of Murther, Aſſaſination, Theft and Rapin, as to Matters of Reputation: Every Virgin ſhall be Raviſh'd, every Wife Debauch'd, every honeſt Man Cuckold, Jealouſie fomented, Rage provok'd, Duelling reſtor'd, *in ſhort*, every wicked Thing will now be practis'd, as it was in thoſe Days I named above — And this, not that Men are not as much at Liberty to do it now as they will be then, but it is not ſo much the Mode now, as it will be then; the People are diverted now, and content themſelves with a little Printed Scandal, but then it will be quite otherwiſe.

Not a Member can walk in the Court of *R—ſts*, not a Lady go into Church, paſs by in a Coach, or be ſeen in the *Mall*; but *Jack* — *Tom* — *Will*, That's he that was meant in the Paper I ſhew'd you; That's *Toriano* in the Ballad; That Lady's *the Julia we read of laſt Night*, and then all the Characters follow: In ſhort, no Innocence can protect, no Quality defend; no Perſon ſo Sacred, no Vertue ſo ſhining, no Courage ſo known, but now they will be attack'd; Cowards will now fight without Danger, Murtherers kill without Weapons, Villains will Aſſaſſinate without Penknives, and Faction depoſe Princes without Rebellion.

Theſe are the bleſſed Doings that will follow the preſent Caſe — *Ay*, ſays one that ſtands by, *and you will have as great a Hand in it as any Body*; it may be ſo too — I ſhall promiſe nothing for myſelf, but that when all the World goes Mad, I may ſhare in the Infection; but this I am ſatisfy'd of, that whether I am or no, I ſhall do then, as I do now, bear the Scandal of a great deal of other People's Crimes, and Father many Baſtards which I have no Hand in the getting; in the mean Time, I wiſh the Parliament before they ſuppreſs the Evil of Printing, in which there may be Ways found out to reſtrain and puniſh, would think of ſome certain Method of preventing or puniſhing the Evil I ſpeak of, which it is moſt certain will riſe up in its Room, and which, when it was up, was the moſt provoking, the moſt uneaſie, both to the Government and to other People, of any Thing of ſuch a Nature in the World.

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